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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis was advanced that if the proverbs of a country could provide clues to its inhabitants' character which could be validated by reference to literature and commentaries of various types, an excellent guide would be available for educators. The information could be of value to teachers in that it would increase sensitivity to students, and it would serve as an aid in determining which aspects of American culture would pose the greatest problems for students. A systematic study was made, therefore, of a collection of 6,000-7,000 Vietnamese proverbs in the hope that the results would be of use to American teachers of Vietnamese students. Selected Vietnamese proverbs were considered as an outline of societal attitudes (the family, the society, religion and fate). Suggestions are given for researchers and teachers based on these findings. Appendix A contains an article by Walter Slote, "Adaptation of Recent Vietnamese Immigres to the American Experience: A Psycho-Cultural Approach." Appendix B is a booklet by Nguyen Kim Hong, "Vietnamese Themes: Understanding Cultural Differences between Americans and Vietnamese, Understanding Educational Differences between Americans and Vietnamese, and Tips to American Educators in Dealing with Vietnamese Students." (CFM)

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VIETNAMESE PROVERBS COMPARED WITH OTHER SOURCES IN INVESTIGATING NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR PEDAGOGICAL PURPOSES

by

Kevin J. Mulroy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Teaching English as a Second Language), Hunter College, The City University of New York.

1977

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How The Study Was Conceived

The writer has been associated both as teacher and friend with a number of Vietnamese refugees since their arrival in the United States.

On one occasion the writer was conducting a class meeting for some adult refugee ESL students and wanted to test their attitudes about some anecdotes which had been related to him by various persons. The writer asked what solutions they would give to the problems raised in the anecdotes. In the first case, an ESL teacher was unable to decide what to do about a teen-aged refugee who ate garlic with his breakfast and had no American friends as a result. In the second case, an adult quit his job when his employer refused to recommend that a voluntary agency buy him expensive tools to further his career in the company. The employer explained that the man did not need them for his present position in the company. In the final case an adult refugee made many personal visits to an American friend's home without advance warning, and at inopportune times. This is usual in Vietnam where telephones are a rarity.

The writer had intended these stories to provide some discussion; but, what they provided instead was something quite different and interesting. Three of the students closest to the writer began speaking to each other quite rapidly and, it seemed, rhythmically. The writer let them continue for a while and then questioned them as to what they had been saying to each other. One of them explained to the writer that they had been discussing the merits of various proverbs as solutions to the situations presented. They had decided that the ESL teacher should advise her student about his "problem," but should procede very delicately.[1] The man who quit his job was wrong according to the students because he lacked patience.[2] Finally, the woman who visited without notice was improper because she followed her own custom which is inappropriate to this country.[3]

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[1]Nguyen Van Ngoc, Tuc Ngu Phong Dao /Proverbs and Folk Songs/ (Hanoi: Vinh Hung Long Thu Quan, 1927; reprint ed., Saigon: Mac Lam, 1968), p. 206.
"Lời nói chẳng mất tiền mua, liệu lời mà nói cho vừa lòng nhau."
/Nice words don't cost anything to buy. Select words to please each other./

[2]Ibid., p. 60.
"Có công mài sắt có ngày nên kim."
/If you have the patience to whet iron, it will one day become a needle./

[3]Ibid., p. 268.
"Nhập gia tùy tục."
/Entering into a house, follow the rules of that house./

Also interesting was the fact that the prime mover in these happenings was a former high school teacher in Saigon. He later explained to the writer that the use of proverbs as solutions to daily problems cuts across all social classes. Furthermore, he indicated that the oral proverb was a way of keeping alive the attitudes and values of the Vietnamese people throughout centuries of Chinese domination. It was this particular incident which suggested the idea behind this research.

Rationale For the Study

> From her voice I could not guess her mood. I suspect that this is because we now speak only English to each other and in English she is someone else, as I am. Languages do bend one morally to their grammatical requirements.[1]
>
> I got Sanford away from homilies--useful as they are to contemplate, since they appear to comprise the national philosophy. . .[2]

The first of these quotations expresses the common wisdom of the present philosophy. The notion is that although language does not determine attitudes it does express them; and, in doing so, it constrains our habitual manner of thinking. If so, then cross-cultural understanding is not merely a matter of translation. Both of the participants in such an exchange must sensitize themselves to the social system of the other. What then must be spoken of is

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[1]Gore Vidal, 1876. A Novel (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 74-75.

[2]Ibid., p. 68.

not learning the language system of another, but learning their communications system.

If language itself expresses the social environment, then so also do such paralinguistic items as kinesics. However, this study confines itself primarily to language expressed features. Grammatical features which tend to explain elements of culture have already been well-explored.[1] Less well-explored (by the language teacher, at any rate) are the commentaries and self-expressions of native speakers about their milieu. Perhaps, it is because the subject is amorphous. It is difficult to know which area of literature, artistic expression, or oral tradition best exemplifies national character. Within each area, it is also difficult to keep one's footing amidst the often conflicting reports.

When the writer came to ponder on these matters it was reasoned that the nonnative commentator is immediately suspect. If such a commentator has been dealing with a bilingual native both may be suspect. In nations of the so-called "Third World" bilinguals, authors and bilingual authors are generally of the upper-classes. Are their observations a representation of their country's cultural system, or simply that of their own social class?

The writer then reasoned that the oral tradition of such countries, springing as it does from the masses of the

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[1]Joshua A. Fishman, The Sociology of Language (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, 1972), Section VIII passim.

people, might provide a better guide. If clues could be found in the collected proverbs of a country to its inhabitants' character and then validated by reference to literature and commentaries of various types, an excellent guide would be had. Moreover, it could be examined in a very systematic way capable of tabulation. If a culture has a number of proverbs dealing with child discipline, conflicting advices are probably to be interpreted as situationally controlled. However, if the great majority stress physical punishment, a systematic cultural attitude is likely to be present.

What use can be made of such information? For the language teacher the information is of value to himself in terms of sensitivity to students. It will also aid the teacher in determining which aspects of American culture will pose the greatest problems for students. The teacher can then plan the cultural content of the lesson with greater confidence.

It had been hoped that a systematic comparison of Vietnamese and American proverbs could be undertaken. However, no real systemization of American proverbs has yet been completed.[1] In addition, current collections contain

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[1]A project for the systematic collection and analysis of American proverbs has been undertaken by the American Dialect Society. No target date for publication has been announced. For information, contact:

Dr. Margaret Bryant
American Dialect Society
222 Hicks St.
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Telephone: (212) 625-4875

vast numbers of items which the writer could only describe as "antique." Many of the items are far less current than the collection. Nonetheless, if analysis of Vietnamese proverbs validates the other literature on Vietnamese culture, then similar commentaries on American culture (or, the teacher's own native intuitions) can be used as a less systematic comparison point.

The Vietnamese collection the writer will be dealing with is even less organized than its American counterparts.[1] However, what the writer seeks to accomplish here is not to provide definite answers. Rather, what is attempted is to propose a method and a framework by which answers may eventually be found. If they are, they will be applicable to any cross-cultural situation; and, not simply the specific one discussed here.

---

[1]Ngoc's collection is not categorized. It is organized by the number of words in the proverb; and then, alphabetically by the first word of the proverb.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND TO THE ANALYSIS

Method and Limits of the Study

The source from which the proverbs have been drawn is a collection of between six and seven thousand proverbs originally published in 1927.[1] No English translation yet appears for the collection.

A bilingual aide was used in the selection and initial literal translation of the proverbs according to instructions provided by the writer. The final translation was arrived at by discussion between the aide and the writer as to the meanings and associations contained in the literal version.

As the study of the proverbs themselves is intended to compose only a portion of this report a limited number were selected. One method of approaching their categorization would have been to develop a theory and select those proverbs that seemed to support the conclusions. This was rejected, although it is not totally without merit under some circumstances. A second method would have been to let the sample suggest its own categorization. This is not

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[1]Ngoc, Ibid.

workable given the size of the sample. So, the writer determined to set up some broad categories, assume no theoretical preconceptions, and select those proverbs which seemed to express the majority attitude. On this last point let it be said that the bilingual aide was given a particular topic and instructed to find as many proverbs dealing with the topic as possible. Proverbs were then selected as representing the majority opinion. Translations of all would have been impossible given the limits of time and space imposed here.

The final selections were then tested for currency. The bilingual aide had been the first currency test in that she was instructed to utilize only those proverbs that were a part of her own repertoire, or which were immediately recognizable. The working stock was then tested with two Vietnamese refugees with whom the writer is acquainted. Ofjections from either of them caused the item to be dropped.

In testing for currency, the writer was at the same time testing for geographical distribution. The bilingual aide is a former resident of Hanoi (north Vietnam); and, the two refugee informants are former residents of Hue (central Vietnam) and Saigon (south Vietnam) respectively.

Quantitative or Qualitative Analysis?

A very rough quantitative analysis was made by the bilingual assistant in determining the majority opinion for which example proverbs were to be selected. A systematic

and complete quantitative analysis must await translation of the entire corpus. The analysis here is basically a qualitative approach. That is, it is an attempt to provide insights based on the content of the material selected rather than on the systematic counting of the frequency of attitudes.

The writer feels that a quantitative analysis would be the ideal method. However, as the scope of the study does not limit itself to proverbs alone, there are opportunities to cross-check the conclusions. In any case, a pure quantification would not answer the related questions which deal with the nature of communication events in which items arise, or the further effect of the item on the development of that communication event. The two concepts of quantitative and qualitative analysis represent areas of emphasis rather than a dichotomy.

Genesis and Imagery of the Proverbs

The genesis of the proverbs of a country are hard to ascertain. They may be traced to a literary source in many instances. However, it is impossible to judge whether the author was the originator of that particular expression or not. Being a product of his culture it is most likely that the particular expression of an idea is simply his formulation of a prevalent attitude among the common people. It could also be simply the first written account of an already structured expression. In any case, it is not the authorship of the proverb that is most important. The general

acceptance which it may attain marks it as a possession, if not a creation, of the masses.

The imagery of the proverbs concerns itself mainly with nature and with daily household activities. This will be more apparent as the actual proverbs themselves are seen. The meanings of the proverbs concern themselves with the nature of man and his relationships. The imagery used thus strongly suggests a peasant authorship concerned with human universals.

CHAPTER III

VIETNAMESE PROVERBS AS AN OUTLINE OF SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

What is carved on stone will wear away with time.
What is taught from mouth to mouth will live forever.[1]

Before discussing the opinions the writer has arrived at from analysing the collection, the obligatory disclaimer must be made. Nothing said here is intended (or, could) give the impression that the general tendencies noted are other than just that. To paraphrase Lincoln, nothing is true of all of the people even some of the time, or even some of the people all of the time.

The Family

Vietnamese society is family oriented; and, like most traditional societies, it places emphasis on premarital female chastity.

Virginity is worth a thousand ounces of gold.[2]

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[1]Quyen Van Duong, Beyond the East Wind, ed. Jewell Reinhart Coburn (Thousand Oaks, California: Burn, Hart and Company Publishers, 1976), p. 95.

[2]Ngoc, p. 77,
"Chữ trinh đáng giá ngàn vàng."

Being a girl, one should have bolted doors and fastened latches.[1]

A flower which has lost its stamen is no longer fragrant.[2]

Arising out of this attitude is the advisability of keeping the sexes separated. (Separate education is an obvious development).

If a straw is laid near the fire long enough it will catch fire.[3]

If a girl plays with a boy then later on her breasts will be as big as two coconuts.[4]

But if the young girl persists in her chastity she will have a good marriage arranged for her because, "Virtue triumphs over beauty."[5] However, she herself does not expect to have any control over the choice of a husband. (This has changed drastically in the last generation, but parental approval is still virtually indispensable.)

I am like a piece of pink silk floating in the market, I don't know into which hand I will fall.[6]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 55.
"Con gái của gãi then đóng."

[2]Ibid., p. 163.
"Hoa mất nhị, lấy gì làm thơm."

[3]Ibid., p. 197.
"Lửa gần rơm lâu ngày cũng bén."

[4]Ibid., p. 74.
"Con gái chơi với con trai, rồi sau cái vú bằng hai sọ dừa."

[5]Ibid., p. 54.
"Cái nết đánh chết cái đẹp."

[6]Ibid., p. 333.
"Thân em như tấm lụa đào, phất-phơ giữa chợ biết vào tay ai."

> Women are just like falling raindrops. One might fall in the emperor's palace, another in a poor man's rice field.[1]

> I see you. I would like to love you, but I am concerned that our parents won't agree.[2]

After marriage, she achieves status for, "The wife is considered the first and God the second."[3] But, that status is only maintained if "virtue" is also maintained. A husband whose wife did not satisfy him might (in the old days) take a second wife. The second wife's fate is even less "ideal." She will, "eat cold rice and sleep in the living room."[4] A man may divorce and remarry, or be widowed and remarry, but a woman may not.

It would be a surprise if this system did not promote some instances of cynicism and rebellion on woman's part.

> Having something to eat, I stay with you. If I am hungry and cold I will go away.[5]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 129.
"Đàn bà như hạt mưa sa; hạt vào gác tía, hạt ra ngoài đồng."

[2]Ibid., p. 18.
"Anh thấy em, anh cũng muốn thương; sợ lòng bác mẹ soi gương chẳng tường."

[3]Ibid., p. 264.
"Nhất vợ, nhì trời."

[4]Ibid., p. 23.
"Ăn cơm nguội, nằm nhà ngoài."

[5]Ibid., p. 72.
"Có ăn thiếp ở cùng chăng; không ăn thiếp tếch, cở hăn thiếp lui."

If you beat me I will bear it. Although we have 10 children I am not giving up my unfaithfulness.[1]

However, most will accept their culture-determined role, and submit to the absolute authority (and whim) of the husband.

A boat follows the helm, a girl follows her husband.[2]

Even the daughter of an Admiral or a Duke must address her husband as "elder brother."[3]

Look at the kitchen and you will know what kind of woman she is.[4]

When a man is absent the home is empty. When a woman is absent, the kitchen is empty.[5]

Throughout her life the Vietnamese woman occupies a position of great respect and little freedom. "Money is made by the husband, but merit is made by the wife."[6] The Vietnamese husband will eventually abrogate a great deal of authority to his wife. To an observer it might appear

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[1]Ibid., p. 16.
"Anh đánh thì tôi chịu đòn, tính tôi hoa nguyệt mười con chẳng chừa."

[2]Ibid., p. 324.
"Thuyền theo lái, gái theo chồng."

[3]Ibid., p. 75.
"Con ông Tổng Đốc Quận Công, lấy chồng cũng phải gọi chồng bằng anh."

[4]Ibid., p. 372.
"Xem trong bếp, biết nết đàn bà."

[5]Ibid., p. 365.
"Vắng đàn ông quạnh nhà, vắng đàn bà quạnh bếp."

[6]Ibid., p. 51.
"Của chồng công vợ."

that she exercises more control over her family than does an American wife. "The husband's drum is not as equal as the gong of the wife."[1] But, the important factor is that this authority is capriciously given and withdrawn by the husband. If she is not careful to avoid overstepping her boundaries (or, even if she is, and the husband finds a new woman) she is to be reminded that, "Brothers are like hands and feet, but husbands and wives are like clothing which can be easily discarded."[2]

A divorce is the ultimate degradation of a Vietnamese woman. She alone is "at fault" regardless of any circumstances. The husband's faults are seen as a result of her failure as a wife.

> Bamboo stalks floating on the river are either crushed or broken. A wicked woman is divorced by her husband.[3]
>
> No one cuts off the ears of a good cat. A woman abandonned by her husband should not boast of her talents.[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 194.
"Lịnh ông không bằng cồng bà."

[2]Ibid., p. 17.
"Anh em như chân, như tay; vợ chồng như áo cởi ngay tức thì."

[3]Ibid., p. 252.
"Nứa trôi sông chẳng rập thì gẫy, gái chồng rẫy chẳng chửng nọ thì tật kia."

[4]Ibid., p. 229.
"Mèo lành ai nỡ cắt tai, gái kia chồng rẫy khoe tài chi em."

If she is fortunate enough to survive these pitfalls, one more may lay in store for her. Only the married woman with children is "completed."

> She has a hassock without trees to support it if she has a husband without children to carry.[1]
>
> A dried-up tree doesn't have buds. A wicked person doesn't have children.[2]
>
> A married woman without children is like a solitary blossom in the mountains.[3]
>
> A woman with children is a tree with roots. A woman without children is timber on the river.[4]

Children are the continuation of the lineage, and a security for the parents' old age. The relationship between parent and child is one of mutual religious, psychological and economic need. "The young rely on their fathers, the old on their children."[5] The relationship is also strong in mutual love.

---

[1]Ibid., p. 72.
"Có vồng mà chẳng có đòn, có chồng mà chẳng có con mà bồng."

[2]Ibid., p. 63.
"Cây khô không có lộc, người độc không có con."

[3]Ibid., p. 72.
"Có chồng mà chẳng có con, khác gì hoa nở trên non một mình."

[4]Ibid., p. 149.
"Gái có con như bồ hòn có rễ, gái không con như bè ngô trôi sông."

[5]Ibid., p. 344.
"Trẻ cậy cha, già cậy con."

A beautiful child of a king, the king loves. An ugly child of mine, I love.[1]

Children don't denigrate poor parents. Dogs don't denigrate poor owners.[2]

Many people like me but when my father passes away who loves me?[3]

Not having parents, you are a musical instrument without a string.[4]

The child's moral and academic education is of great concern to the parents. Discipline regarding these matters is rigid. Yet, in other circumstances the child has more freedom than his American counterpart. Watch a Vietnamese family on an outing and the difference becomes clear. The Americans are constantly supervising, directing and scolding their children. The Vietnamese tends to smile tolerantly at his children's behavior, no matter how "raucous" by our standards. After all, "children are children." And yet, it would seem to be true that the Vietnamese parent exercises far more control over the important areas of his children's lives than do Americans.

---

[1]Ibid., p. 64.
"Con vua tốt, vua dấu; con tôi xấu, tôi yêu."

[2]Ibid., p. 64.
"Con chăng chê cha mẹ khó, chó chẳng chê chủ nghèo."

[3]Ibid., p. 75.
"Còn cha nhiều kẻ yếu vì; một mai cha thác, ai thì yêu con."

[4]Ibid., p. 71.
"Có cha có mẹ thì hơn, không cha, không mẹ như đơn không dây."

> If children are better than their fathers, it is the sign of a fortunate family.[1]
>
> If you want to become self-sufficient and self-respecting, you should listen to your parents' advice.[2]
>
> If fish are not preserved in salt, they will be tainted. If children resist their parents, they will be spoiled in a hundred ways.[3]
>
> A child is spoiled if his father is too lenient.[4]

Children are the greatest joy of a Vietnamese family. The responsibility is great, "one who has experience in raising children will understand the parents' heart,"[5] but it is a responsibility that is sought and gratefully accepted.

The husband's parents are the next highest level of authority above him. The daughter-in-law owes all her allegiance to them.

> Our daughter is now another's child. Our daughter-in-law belongs to us, for we have purchased her.[6]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 56.
"Con hơn cha, nhà có phúc."

[2]Ibid., p. 55.
"Con ơi muốn nên thân người, lắng tai nghe lấy những lời mẹ cha."

[3]Ibid., p. 67.
"Cá chẳng ăn muối cá ươn, con cưỡng cha mẹ trăm đường con hư."

[4]Ibid., p. 73.
"Con hư bởi tại cha dong."

[5]Ibid., p. 59.
"Có nuôi con mới biết lòng cha mẹ."

[6]Ibid., p. 73.
"Con gái là con người ta, con dâu mới thật mẹ cha mua về."

The mother-in-law is a person to whom respect is due. She is not the butt of jokes as here. Rather, it is often the daughter-in-law who is the object of criticism.

> The father-in-law is like the beautiful plumage of a phoenix. The mother-in-law is a coat of fresh, new paint. But, the daughter-in-law is a basket of curses.[1]

The Society

The respect for elder family members carries itself over into societal relations as well.

> Respect old people and they will give you the wisdom that leads to longevity.[2]

> A 70 year old has to learn from a 71 year old.[3]

In a sense, the society is approached as if were an extension of the family. It may be that it is more in the nature of an in-law who must be treated with reserve and caution; but, it is not yet the same as regarding society as a hostile force with which one has to contend. (As is often the case here). The Vietnamese is taught values which are cohesive and not individualistic.

> When young you are the child of your parents. Later, you are the child of the king.[4]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 46.
"Bố chồng như lồng con phượng, mẹ chồng như tượng mới tô, nàng dâu là bồ nghe chửi."

[2] Ibid., p. 172.
"Kính già, già để tuổi cho."

[3] Ibid., p. 36.
"Bảy mươi còn học bảy mươi mốt."

[4] Ibid., p. 40.
"Bé thì con mẹ, con cha; lớn thì con vua, con chúa."

When one horse is sick, a herd of horses stops eating. /Loyalty to a friend in distress/.[1]

Modesty and humility are also conduits through which behavior is chanelled.

Whoever wants to be first, I will be second; and, if another would be second, I will be third.[2]

One time of digesting an insult is worth nine meals of blessings.[3]

In general, the Vietnamese is advised to avoid conflict and risk-taking. There is acknowledgment that this characteristic is sometimes necessary. However, only a few individuals are likely to follow this course, while the majority will follow the leaders' almost parental authority--with suspicion and caution.

Go where there is something to eat. Stay away where there is a fight.[4]

When eating go first. When fording a stream go last. /The first in the water may find it's deeper than anticipated/.[5]

Without entering the tiger's den, you can't catch a tiger cub.[6]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 222.
"Một con ngựa đau, cả tàu chê cỏ."

[2]Ibid., p. 16.
"Ai nhất, thì tôi thứ nhì; ai mà hơn nữa, tôi thì thứ ba."

[3]Ibid., p. 220.
"Một sự nhịn là chín sự lành."

[4]Ibid., p. 24.
"Ăn uống tìm đến, đánh nhau tìm đi."

[5]Ibid., p. 23.
"Ăn đi trước, lội nước đi sau."

[6]Ibid., p. 37.
"Bất nhập hổ huyệt, bất đắc hổ tử."

Caution in relationships applies very strongly to the spoken word. A Vietnamese acquaintance will often appear withdrawn and/or sullen (which are our characteristic interpretations of silence). However, the same individual as a friend will often be voluble and gregarious.

> Eating, one must chew. Speaking, one must think.[1]
>
> If you know, speak. If not, relax and listen.[2]
>
> Excessive eating produces sickness. Excessive talking produces trouble.[3]
>
> A man who talks well creates his position. A woman with a big mouth destroys her family.[4]
>
> You can seal a jar or a bottle's opening, but you cannot stop a fool's mouth.[5]

Industriousness and patience are necessary virtues in an agrarian society. The reasons cannot be rushed, and there is always work to be done. "If you have the patience to whet iron, it will one day become a needle."[6] But, such a society also breeds a non-laboring administrative class that is envied. In employment the Vietnamese will either

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.
"Ăn có nhai, nói có nghĩ."

[2]Ibid., p. 38.
"Biết thưa thốt, không biết dựa cột mà nghe."

[3]Ibid., p. 37.
"Bịnh tùy khẩu nhập, họa tùy khẩu xuất."

[4]Ibid., p. 128.
"Đàn ông rộng miệng thì sang, đàn bà rộng miệng tan hoang của nhà."

[5]Ibid., p. 39.
"Bưng miệng vỏ, miệng lọ, ai bưng được miệng thiên hạ."

[6]Ibid., p. 60.
"Có công mài sắt, có ngày nên kim."

try to manipulate his superiors, or his natural habits of diligence will win out. The operative factor in his decision is probably the personal authority of the employer, and the amount of loyalty he is able to engender.

> Eating, select delicious food. Working, select small and light jobs.[1]
>
> Eat like a boat carrying horses. Work like a girl playing with the moon.[2]
>
> Eat the boss's food, dance day and night.[3]

The natural inclination however is to behave in accord with the family based values that have been learned from the earliest moment. The Vietnamese is more sensitive to real or imagined hurts than Westerners are: and, his reaction to them is more extreme. As we have seen, with an employer (or, others) it is often a choice between manipulation and almost blind loyalty. But in general, the reaction to others is warm, generous and grateful.

> Friendship is treating people well all the time.[4]
>
> Sell far away relatives, buy close neighbors.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 26.
"Ăn, thì ăn những miếng ngon; làm, thì chọn việc còn-con mà làm."

[2] Ibid., p. 25.
"Ăn như thuyền chở mã, làm như a chởi trăng."

[3] Ibid., p. 22.
"Ăn cơm chúa, múa tối ngày."

[4] Ibid., p. 42.
"Bạn bè là nghĩa tương-tri, sao cho sau trước một bề mới nên."

[5] Ibid., p. 36.
"Bán anh em xa, mua láng-diềng gần."

We restrain from eating that the guest may feast.[1]

If a guest comes we prepare chicken or duck.[2]

Eating fruit, think of the planter.[3]

Drinking water, think of the man who dug the well.[4]

Religion and Fate

Eating takes a lot of food, living does not occupy much space.[5]

Having three bowls of rice, having a dress of three pieces /Is sufficient/.[6]

The general philosophy of life is a simple and practical one. So also, is the attitude toward religion. "Serve food before serving religion."[7] This may have grown out of the mixture of religious philosophies that have found a home in Vietnam. Alternatively, it may have been the result of the farmer's dependence on weather; or, the helpless feeling of the oppressed during centuries of foreign

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[1]Ibid., p. 264.
"Nhịn miệng thết khách."

[2]Ibid., p. 181.
"Khách đến nhà, chẳng gà thì vịt."

[3]Ibid., p. 22.
"Ăn quả, nhớ kẻ trồng cây."

[4]Ibid., p. 357.
"Uống nước, nhớ kẻ đào giếng."

[5]Ibid., p. 23.
"Ăn hết nhiều, ở hết bao nhiêu."

[6]Ibid., p. 56.
"Cơm ba bát, áo ba manh."

[7]Ibid., p. 55.
"Có thực mới vực được đạo."

domination. Whatever the genesis, the Vietnamese relies heavily on simple human virtues and resignation to events which he perceives as largely beyond his control.

He/she is as kind as the Buddha.[1]

Sincerity means the Buddha.[2]

An honest meat-eater is better than a vegetarian liar.[3]

Building an altar to God is not as good as saving a person.[4]

Parents create the child's body, God creates the character.[5]

Please, don't call me ugly, my parents bore me that way.[6]

Until the last day of the year, one never knows if he is rich or not.[7]

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[1]Ibid., p. 158.
"Hiền như Bụt."

[2]Ibid., p. 83.
"Chân tâm tức Phật."

[3]Ibid., p. 24.
"Ăn mặn nói ngay, hơn ăn chay nói dối."

[4]Ibid., p. 109.
"Dầu xây chín bực phù đồ, chẳng bằng lấm phúc cứu cho một người."

[5]Ibid., p. 90.
"Cha mẹ sinh con, trời sinh tính."

[6]Ibid., p. 16.
"Anh đừng chê thiếp xấu-xa, bởi chưng bác mẹ sinh ra thế này."

[7]Ibid., p. 154.
"Giàu có ba mươi tết mới hay."

Fame and wealth are not as valuable as leisure.[1]

Position and fame are the picture of a cake. Nobility and wealth are a dream.[2]

Studying is a question of intelligence. Passing exams is a matter of fate.[3]

The writer could have quoted at even greater length than he has done so. Acceptance of "fate" is a predominant theme of the Vietnamese's life. A minor theme indicates that personal merit does have some efficacy and that God is not indifferent; but, the warning always is that the reward is often not in his present life.

Everyone must be kind. If it is not returned in this life, it will be in the next.[4]

God doesn't turn down kind persons.[5]

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[1]Ibid., p. 106.
"Danh lợi bất như nhàn."

[2]Ibid., p. 61.
"Công danh bánh vẽ, sang giàu chiếm bao."

[3]Ibid., p. 160.
"Học tài, thi phận."

[4]Ibid., p. 14.
"Ai ơi! hãy ở cho lành; kiếp này chẳng gặp, để dành kiếp sau."

[5]Ibid., p. 163.
"Hoàng thiên bất phụ hảo tâm nhân."

CHAPTER IV

A ROUNDTABLE OF WRITERS

Vietnam Speaks

The writer has stated in the introduction that a charge of upper-class astigmatism must provisionally be laid against any member of that class from a "Third World" nation who professes to explain the masses of his country to us. For the purpose of examining this charge we selected a book written by an internationally educated Vietnamese scholar.[1] The author, Dr. Vuong Gia Thuy, is at present Coordinator of the Indochinese program of the Board of Education of New York City. Dr. Thuy does not make much use of proverbs (one or two examples) in explicating his countrymen to us, but instead draws upon his own experiences and intuitions.

This writer attempted a concordance between the two, and found them to be supportive of each other. This was done, as an experiment, with only a portion of the proverbs; and, was applied to only two of Dr. Thuy's four main chapters (those covering Vietnamese values and characteristics). Following is a list of some of the topics covered by the

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[1]Vuong G. Thuy, Getting to Know the Vietnamese & Their Culture (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1976).

proverb collection; and, the page numbers in Dr. Thuy's book which discuss and support the notion of the proverbs.

Topic	Page #
Respect for Age	19
Authority of the Husband	25
Virginity	25
Childless Woman	26
Divorce	28
Child Discipline	29
Parental Choice of Spouse	30
Modesty & Humility	35
Avoidance of Conflict	36
Reticence in Talking	38
Friendship and Gratitude	41
Separation of Sexes	45

The Vietnamese concept of "fate" is supposedly clear to them and perhaps this is why their writers often fail to consider giving a better explanation of it to Western readers. For example, in an otherwise excellent book, a Vietnamese commentator describes Buddhism and Taoism as, ". . . a pessimistic, negative outlook /which/ undoubtedly exerted unfavorable effects on the progress of technology . . ."[1] Elsewhere, he describes them as being perceived by

[1]Minh Van Do, Vietnam: Where East and West Meet, 2d ed., rev. and enl. (Rome: Edizioni Quattro Venti, 1968; reprint ed., New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., n.d.), p. 59.

Westerners as, ". . . obviously pessimistic and fatalistic . . ."[1] Nowhere however, does he give us the kind of reasoning that would explain how a people imbued with such a philosophy could have proved themselves capable of violent, sustained action in the face of many adversities.

Turning again to Dr. Thuy's book, in a brief but lucid explanation he tells us simply that the Vietnamese considers the situation of his next life to be the direct result of his actions in this one.[2]

Although the Vietnamese is motivated to action, he will stoically accept any failure that may occur. Calmness in the face of defeat, and acceptance of the new reality created thereby, are not the same as passivity.

A View from the Bridge

Francois Sully was a French journalist (former soldier) who covered the Vietnamese scene for Newsweek magazine. In, "We the Vietnamese," he presents a collection of historical and modern authors in brief selections.[3] The authors are pro-communist and anti-communist Vietnamese, and also some Westerners. Those Vietnamese authors included, it must be remembered, have been selected by Mr. Sully, a

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[1]Ibid., p. 50-51.

[2]Thuy, p. 35.

[3]Francois Sully, ed., We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).

Westerner. Thus, we have a kind of bridge here between a Vietnamese view of the country and a purely Western view. Sully's collection is selected; but, also authentic.

Attention was focused on the first main division of the book entitled, "Land and People: Beliefs and Customs." Excluding articles written by Western authors, nineteen articles are found to remain. Of these, fifteen were written by anti-communist, southern Vietnamese. An interesting situation occurs here in that six of these fifteen articles use a traditional Vietnamese proverb to demonstrate the main theme of their topic. An example follows:

> Miss Trinh Thi Mai, twenty-three, a Saigon student, is only too acutely aware of the problem. Wryly, she quotes a Vietnamese proverb that says "Thirty-year-old men are still young, but thirty-year-old women are already getting old."[1]

In the four articles written by pro-communists traditional proverbs are not used. However, in one article on collective farms a political slogan is used. "To make the Northwest their new village and the state farm their new family."[2] Of course, the writer realizes that he is being prejudicial in attaching the words "political slogan" to this saying. It was said earlier that it is the acceptance, rather than the creation, which marks items like this as "proverbial." Obviously, the communists are attempting to

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[1]Ibid., p. 80, So Many Girls, and not Enough Husbands by Nguyen Thuoc.

[2]Ibid., p. 19-20, The Dien Bien Phu State Farm by Do Xuan Sang.

create a new folk wisdom based on the new ideology; and, in so doing, they do not (nor, could not) make a sharp break with the traditional values.

The West Replies

The French and the Americans have written extensively about their political and military concerns in Vietnam. However, almost nowhere does a picture of the Vietnamese as a human being emerge. The one exception is in the case of that dominant figure who is known to Westerners as "Uncle Ho." Jean Lacouture, the French biographer of Ho, has this to say, ". . . where does acting begin and end in the behavior of such a man?"[1] Again, however, it is not the genuineness of Ho's image that concerns us; but rather, it is the acceptance and nature of that image as a reflection of cultural values. The first proclamation issued by Ho in 1945 as head of North Vietnam was addressed to the children of the country on the occasion of a children's festival. It opens and closes thusly, "My dear children . . . I just send you my loving kisses."[2]

Uncle Ho is a translation of the Vietnamese "Bac Ho." "Bac" does not mean simply, "Uncle." It means elder brother of the father (or mother). Traditionally such an uncle

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[1]Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography (New York: Random House, Inc., Vintage Books, 1968), p. 217.

[2]Ibid., p. 205-206.

exercised authority over the children of his younger brother in important decisions (as for example, choice of marriage partners). In using this term Ho sets hemself above the parents.

In, "Fire in the Lake" Frances Fitzgerald emphasizes that the course of Vietnamese history has been dominated by personal authority and not ideals.[1] Furthermore, she indicates that once social change has been effected the people tend to cease resistance and accommodate themselves to the new order which is seen as evidence of the will of heaven.

> To the Vietnamese of the twentieth century "peace" meant not a compromise between various interest groups and organizations, but the restoration of a single uniform way of life. The Vietnamese were not interested in pluralism, they were interested in unanimity.[2]

This attitude has its consequences in education. Fitzgerald relates the story of an American professor at Saigon university who tried to teach comparative government through analysis of past systems and political theory. The first assignment went well; but, the second (which contradicted the theory of the first) brought great criticism.

> "What do you mean?" They asked angrily. "What do you mean by teaching us one thing one day and one thing the next?" The students could not conceive that government could be a matter of opinion. Either a government

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[1]Frances Fitzgerald, Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam (New York: Atlantic-Little, Brown Books, Little, Brown and Company in association with The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1972; Vintage Books, 1973), p. 37, 39, 101.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

had worked or it had not, and if it had not worked then it was not a proper subject for study.[1]

Very pragmatic. Americans are pragmatic too, but our pragmatism is of a different type which does not prevent abstraction and synthesis of ideas in a search for the quintessentially workable system. The Vietnamese either totally accepts or totally rejects.

Two other views of the Vietnamese are especially recommended to the reader. The first, "Village in Vietnam" by Gerald Hickey is an anthropoligist's account of a rural village.[2] The second, "Life in a Vietnamese Urban Quarter" performs the same function in that setting.[3] Both deal with the lower (presumably, more traditional) social classes that make up almost ninety-percent of the country's population. Interesting, once again, is the correlation that exists between the two accounts regardless of setting. Together, they also correlate with the views previously noted by this writer.

Toilet training is casual; small children are permitted to relieve themselves anywhere but in the house.[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 23.

[2]Gerald Cannon Hickey, Village in Vietnam (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964).

[3]Marilyn W. Hoskins and Eleanor M. Shepherd, Life in a Vietnamese Urban Quarter, monograph series 1 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1965).

[4]Hickey, p. 111.

> Toilet training is most relaxed . . . several times toddlers were seen having bowel movements at the doorway of houses or stores, and these were merely wiped up with paper by the mother. The child was not scolded.[1]

One final view is also worthy of mention. A recent publication of the Center for Applied Linguistics deals in part with Vietnamese culture. It is significant that it begins its discussion by reference to a Vietnamese proverb.

> Just as the length of a road is known only by actually traveling on it, the qualities of a man are known only by living with him for a long time.[2]

Without belaboring the point, high correlations were also found in this material. It outlines the characteristics of the Vietnamese as being industriousness, reverence for education, sentimentality, propriety and harmony. On the negative side (from our viewpoint), it lists passivity in learning style, and willingness to abandon principle in the face of defeat. (In their world view this is looked upon as listening to the voice of heaven. In the western view it is Machavellianism).

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[1]Hoskins and Shepherd, p. 136-137.

[2]A Manual for Indochinese Refugee Education: 1976-1977 (Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1976), p. 113.

CHAPTER V

KEEPING WATCH

Psychological Considerations

The October, 1976 edition of HEW's "New Life" contains an article concerning conference held in Spring 1976 at Asia Society (New York City) which was:

> . . . attended by representatives of voluntary resettlement agencies, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Refugee Task Force, and other organizations concerned with the problem of refugee adjustment . . .[1]

Of the participants quoted in the article, two in particular caught the writer's interest. Later, the writer was to discover that these two gentlemen are collaborating on a research project concerned with Vietnamese personality patterns.

One of those two participants was Walter H. Slote, Ph.D. Dr. Slote had made a number of case studies in Vietnam. With the assistance of collaborators he is making a study of the psycho-cultural dynamics of the Vietnamese personality. Dr. Slote was kind enough to provide the writer with a copy of a talk that he has given on several occasions.[2]

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[1]"Indochinese Coping Well with Life in America," New Life, October 1976, p. 1.

[2]The text of the talk appears in appendix A.

Dr. Slote's material concerns itself essentially with two aspects of Vietnamese culture. Dr. Slote states that the primary fact of existence for the Vietnamese is the family. He relates an anecdote in which a girl fifteen years old (living in the United States) appealed to her grandmother (living in Hanoi) to resolve a problem the girl had. The family had not been able to contact the grandmother from 1954 until shortly before that time. The girl wanted to date. The grandmother would not hear of it; and, appeal to another family member (with the approval of the grandmother) was to no avail. Authority in the family is structured and accepted. From this writer's point of view an additional item of interest is that in Dr. Slote's recital, the grandmother is said to have used a number of arguments of which one was the citing of proverbs.

Dr. Slote's second main consideration is the question of Fate, which he says causes the Vietnamese to believe that they lack control over the circumstances of their lives. In the case of the majority of individuals this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The parallels to what has been previously states are apparent. The Vietnamese individual has a tendency to be a follower who will accept the lead of a self-determining individual. Reality changed, he embraces it as the kharma of his society. In the case of the refugees, this may have the happy effect (as Dr. Slote suggests) of making their adjustment to American society less traumatic.

A number of refugee mental health projects have been funded by HEW.[1] No results are yet available. However, it will be difficult to ascertain even at a later date if any results are representative for a number of reasons. Some of those reasons could be: lack of bilingual mental health practitioners; lack of knowledge by the refugee as to available services; reluctance to seek aid outside of the family unit; and, misunderstanding and avoidance of psychiatry (which is unknown in Vietnam).

A Layman's View

Mr. Stephen B. Young, chairman of Asia Society's Vietnam council, was the other participant the writer spoke of who is now working with Dr. Slote. Since that is the case, we could reasonably expect many of his views to coincide with those of Dr. Slote. Mr. Young was kind enough to grant the writer an interview.[2] Once again, the dominance of the family, and the concept of fate are a central theme.

The writer can show again by example how almost any topic discussed by one observer can be easily related to those of another. Mr. Young's conception of child discipline in Vietnam is that it is erratic and arbitrary. In the first

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[1]HEW Task Force For Indochina Refugees, Report To The Congress, December 20, 1976, p. 38-39.

[2]Interview with Stephen B. Young, New York City, April 1977.

few years of life there is great affection. Later, this changes to almost indifference. Compare that with the following.

> Life for a Vietnamese is not consistent. When a child is tiny he receives constant attention, but when another baby comes along the child is expected to love the new baby immediately, give in to its every demand, and to cease to need much comfort and coddling from the family.[1]

It is Mr. Young's quite reasonable conclusion that this situation produces an individual who believes that forces outside his control influence his fate. If he has tried to please his parents, their indifference must either be the result of some unperceived guilt, or some cosmic force. The latter is more readily accepted, but, the former may always remain in the depths of his personality. So, in concluding this section, the wheel of patterns has turned again to the slot marked, "Fate."

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[1]Hoskins & Shepherd, p. 140.

CHAPTER VI

PAUSE IN A JOURNEY

Image of a People

What emerges is an image of a people who respect and accept authority. A people of extremes who may be the best of friends or the most subtle of enemies. A people who, in our view, may lack a balanced personality. There is little motivation to compromise. Acceptance or rejection of a situation are virtually the only choices; and, they are likely to base their choice on what to us, would seem insignificant factors. Yet, there is always a trade-off. The Vietnamese has a strong sense of his origins, a feeling of community with his neighbors, and a wealth of spiritual values.

In some ways the Vietnamese can be even more "American" than we. He pursues material wealth for its enjoyment. It is not a sign of his spirituality; and, his failure to attain it does not create a "Calvinist crisis." He can be far more industrious than we; and, when he relaxes he does not have to "work at it." Assimilation will be a painful process for the refugee and his host country. One also hopes that it will not be a total process. There is a great

deal of worth in their culture that needs to be preserved for their sake--and, for ours.

Suggestions for Researchers

The writer has already evinced a number of conclusions (or, perhaps opinions is a better term). Analysis of various means of viewing this particular culture seems to point to a high degree of concord. But, perhaps the selection of other views was unconsciously determined by the results of the proverb analysis. The writer was dealing with the remarks of a limited number of individuals.

Taken alone, the limited number of proverbs reviewed cannot point to any certain resolution. In addition, any more comprehensive analysis of Vietnamese proverbs would still leave unanswered the questions of situational stimuli and responses.

Nonetheless, the writer feels that the information derivable is a tool in raising the consciousness of educators (and others) who are in contact with the Vietnamese. It is suggested that a comprehensive quantitative analysis would yield a powerful means of observing this society which would be free of the emphasis (or, bias) of individual observers. Furthermore, it is suggested that this kind of investigation can be readily applied to cultures other than the one under consideration here. Finally, once a similar analysis of American proverbs is available, the educator may be in a better position to explain <u>our</u> culture to the ESL student.

Suggestions for Teachers

The classroom teacher encounters a room of individual students, and not a room of abstractions. To attempt to predict any specific kinds of behavior from philosophical tendencies would be suicidal; and, to predict any individual's course of action would be criminal. Most generalizations are false including (as the old saw has it) this one. Therefore, some generalizations are true. Still, it must be remembered that they remain generalizations.

The writer adopts a weak contrastive analysis theory in the case of specific kinds of behavior. It is preferred to observe such behavior rather than attempt to predict it. In line with that, it is felt that the practical hints of educators (Vietnamese, and otherwise) who have had direct experience with the Vietnamese are an invaluable aid. Mentioned earlier was Dr. Vuong Gia Thuy's book. In addition to background on Vietnamese culture it contains a brief, simple but valuable section of hints to teachers. The CAL manual referred to previously is also an excellent source. Last, but certainly not least, is a booklet prepared by Ms. Nguyen Kim Hong (Mrs. K. J. Mulroy). The fact that Ms. Hong is the wife of this writer has in no way influenced the decision to include her name. And if you believe that, I have some real estate I would like to talk to you about. Seriously though, it is an excellent source, and it is included in appendix B.

Parting Thoughts

These are but simple words
That I have gathered here and there
and strung together one by one.
May they give you pastime
in the long watches of the night.[1]

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[1]William Negherbon, The Story of Lady Kieu, Center for Vietnamese Studies, Monograph series II, Some Aspects of Vietnamese Culture (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University, n.d.), p. 58. /His translation of Nguyen Du's epic poem/.

Appendix A

ADAPTION OF RECENT VIETNAMESE IMMIGRES TO THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: A PSYCHO-CULTURAL APPROACH

ADAPTION OF RECENT VIETNAMESE IMMIGRES TO THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: A PSYCHO-CULTURAL APPROACH

by
Walter H. Slote, Ph.D.

Two years ago the Republic of South Vietnam fell to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and as you all know, some in a very intimate sense, one of the most massive air and sea evacuations in our history occurred. As of December 1, 1976 approximately 144,000 Indochinese, of whom the vast majority were Vietnamese, were residing in the United States.

Both the relocation and integration of these refugees, and in this paper I will be referring entirely to the Vietnamese, has represented an impressive example of the capacity of two societies to accommodate to one another. Although quite expectedly there have been problems, few of the apprehensions and none of the predictions of the doomsday sayers have been realized. Once again America has been enriched by a new culture, as it has many times in the past, and once again we are the stronger for it.

The Vietnamese have been the third (I am not including the Ugandans who were smaller in number) relatively large refugee group to come to the United States within the past 20 years - the earlier being the Hungarians and the Cubans. The Hungarians, inasmuch as they too came here over a very short space of time, are more comparable. The Vietnamese faced a major problem that the others did not: they had no community here to come to. For example, many Hungarian emigres had families in the United States, and there were long established Hungarian and other East European communities which gathered them in. Moreover, the Hungarians, many of whom spoke English, and being Caucasian and Western, were not as "different".

Needless to say, the Vietnamese were quite different - although with the recent changes (1965) in United States immigration quotas and the resultant marked population increase in other Asian communities here, the problem of acceptability was lessened. The drama of the moment, our sense of communal responsibility and guilt over our involvement - or rather the nature of our involvement - in the Indochinese war, and indeed compassion and caring, two of mankind's better emotions, all played a role on our part in not only accepting but for the most part welcoming the Vietnamese.

Because of the sponsorship program many Vietnamese initially found themselves in various out-of-the-way places in the United States, cut off from other Vietnamese. This was inevitable because of the nature of the sponsorship program. It was a grave psychological error and recognized as such. For the most part, however, they were settled in or near large urban centers. Although in this first phase the Vietnamese had little to say about their destination, a second sequence has predictably occurred in which they made their own determination as to where they would live - areas where friends and family were established and that afforded more congenial work and educational opportunities.

The sponsorship program, a most ungainly and laborious vehicle for a crash refugee plan eventually did find a sufficient number of sponsors. I am sure that most of you know that for many Vietnamese this was an excruciatingly painful process. For those not immediately sponsored, the months in the relocation centers were fraught with uncertainty and fear. Not only had their lives been gravely disrupted and thus they had the past to deal with, but the future in this alien and seemingly inhospitable place was bleak. I would suggest that a more effective, and humane, system of handling large migratory waves of people might be found. The fact that it worked at all was due to the untiring and conscientious efforts of some very dedicated people, not to the system itself. The Congress and the Carter Administration should address themselves to a major revision of these procedures.

As some of you here may know, Steven Young and myself, with the gracious help of many in the Vietnamese community in America who are newly arrived, and especially with the help of Hoa Young, our central bridge between our two cultures, have been expanding the study on the psychocultural dynamics of the Vietnamese that was begun in 1965.

I should like to present some of our more recent findings to you that I believe have particular relevance to understanding the Vietnamese and their accommodation to the United States and that I see as being of signifance in answering the issues posed by this meeting.

The primary strength of the Vietnamese arises out of the family, and this statement can be made without qualification. Relationships, as in other traditional oriental societies, are structured, roles are defined and patterns are understood. The family is enduring and there is a place for each member. The ultimate punishment is to be cast out, and when this happens, as it occasionally does, the impact is apparently devastating for the errant member. I say "apparently" because this is an incomplete area in our research, one which we are pursuing. However although the

family is the source of primary security frequently it is also the source of great tension, anxiety, very complex animosities and extraordinarily intricate maneuvering. When the chips are down however, the Vietnamese family pull together. In fact, what I have been most struck by is the fluidity of the family when it is operating well.

The Vietnamese family functions as both a reality, an actuality which is there, and eidetically. By this I refer to the image of the family, and it is this eidetic image of the family that sustains many Vietnamese when the actual family no longer exists or is far away.

This is particularly pertinent at the present time. I have not been able to find supportable statistics on the number of Vietnamese who were able to come with other members of their nuclear families, but my own impression is that it is high. Regardless of this, few complete families seem to be here and so, for practically all, the internalized image of the family plays a crucial role in their sense of security and personal integrity - two very important components in survival and re-establishing one's life.

I should like to give an example that demonstrates the re-integrative capacity, the strength of the eidetic component and the immediate recourse to traditional relationships within the Vietnamese family. While interviewing the elderly parents of a Vietnamese friend, one who is married to an American, who speaks fluent English and has alternately lived both here and in Vietnam for the past 15 years, the grandmother mentioned that her 15 year old granddaughter (the product of the grandmother's first marriage) had presented them with a problem that had caused some differences within the family. The young girl lived in Hanoi, the daughter of the oldest son who, together with an older daughter, had remained in the north when the family came south in 1954. Shortly thereafter direct communication had ceased and except for minimal information about one another, inderictly obtained, all direct contact was lost. Some years later the son died, but until recently the family in Saigon was not even certain of that. When it was clear that the South Vietnamese Government was about to fall, my informant, who together with her husband and children was in Saigon at the time, was evacuated together with her parents and a younger sister to Washington where they now live. Through a network of channels, a system that the Vietnamese are expert at, contact between the Hanoi and the Washington branches of the family was rapidly established via another family member in Paris. Almost immediately after this was accomplished the 15 year old wrote to her grandmother, whom she had never met, saying that she had a school friend, a boy but not a boyfriend. Her mother objected to the relationship and had forbidden the young girl to see the young

man, who was also 15, but had given the girl permission to consult her grandmother and would, inasmuch as she was the daughter-in-law, of course abide by her decision.

The family here accepted the problem as an extremely serious matter. My friend and informant argued for a progressive stance. She trusted the young girl to act properly and with dignity and insisted that it could only be an innocent relationship, and that boys and girls of this age should be allowed to spend time together. She said that it was a necessary step to later more mature relationships, that this was a new day, etc. The grandmother was adament. She argued that one thing can lead to another, and cited proverbs and various tragic examples - some several centuries old - to prove her point. My friend, realizing that she was outmatched proposed that they consult her younger sister - who by now was married and lived elsewhere - basing her argument on the fact that the sister was closer to the granddaughter's age. The grandmother agreed. My informant was elated thinking that because her sister was younger she would agree with her. But the grandmother knew her daughter far better than her older sister did. The younger sister, having lived all her life up to 1975 in Vietnam, agreed with her mother. Thereupon the 15 year old was directed not to see the boy and "to concentrate on her studies". Issue resolved.

The Vietnamese here fear most that the children will lose their sense of Vietnamese-ness, their sense of personal and national identity and that they will be lost to the family. "In 5 years, 10 years, will our children be the same? Will they still speak the language? How shall we deal with them? We have a sense of history (referring to both the generational sequence - ancestor worship and filial piety, and the nation's history). How can we pass this along? Can we endow our children with our sense of history or will they have a new one that comes from the schools and from life here and that is very different from ours." A very touching statement made by a 56 year old, well educated man who brings his 14 year old son up in the traditional, authoritarian way.

I certainly need not state to this group that, in addition to those already discussed, there are many elements, both psychological and cultural, which can be expected to play determining roles in the Vietnamese accommodation to America. Being forced to select among them by the pressure of time I would like to briefly discuss the sense of both power and powerlessness over one's destiny and the issue of the self-fulfilling prophesy, both of which appear to be core elements in the Vietnamese inner experience, and which are relevant here.

In the United States we believe that essentially we establish our own destiny - and if we do not believe so we are soon made aware of our deviation from the norm by the various schools of psychotherapy - practically all of which have this theme as their central message. The Vietnamese believe that for the most part their destiny is determined elsewhere and although in practice they most certainly do not assign themselves to an unremitting fate, in the face of adversity there exists a range of reasons external to one's self that suffice as appropriate. Specifically, that it is not I who am responsible for ill or good fortune, but forces outside myself that are acting on me and which account for the course that life has taken.

For the Vietnamese one's destiny is determined by four primary aspects of existence: Phuc Duc; astrology, one's horoscope; the spirit world, the genii; and to a somewhat lesser extent geomancy. All interact as parts of a mosaic. The Vietnamese are an industrious and determined people. But underneath all conscious effort and conscious determination is the profound sense that life is essentially pre-ordained, that control over what occurs is partial at best.

Among the Vietnamese Phuc Duc is a universal concept. The gradients of the translation are difficult but essentially it refers to the virtue that derives from merit. It is the accumulation of rewards for meritorious performance in this life which then affects the lives of those in succeeding generations unto the fifth generation as well as one's own. It is quantifiable, and the family's phuc duc can be diminished by improper conduct. The amount of phuc duc one acquires is dependent upon the nature of the act and especially on the amount of sacrifice that is involved. Behavior that results in the acquisition of phuc duc is well understood and essentially codified. Recently we have been translating a Vietnamese poem attributed to the 15th Century, the GIA HUAN CA, that deals with proper conduct, primarily for women and it is impressive how little the forms have changed over the centuries.

Phuc duc is primarily, although not solely, the responsibility of the woman. Thus the nature of a bride, whether she is self effacing, trustworthy, hard working and moral is of consequence in more than an immediate sense because if her character suggests that she might not be virtuous, the family for generations to come may be destructively affected.

Inasmuch as it is primarily the responsibility of the women, it leaves the men relatively free to act with a good deal of abandon without a major destructive impact on the generational sequence, unless, of course, the act is considered extremely reprehensible.

To a great extent phuc duc acts as the social conscience of the nation, a collective super-ego. The children are conscientiously instructed in the ways of living that result in phuc duc. It is, in great part, related to the confucian concept of Li, although it is actually Buddhist - Confucian in origin and unique to Vietnam. It has its place in future re-incarnations but primarily it relates to the family and to future generations of the family. Thus the responsibility that it represents is impressively exacting: the future destiny of one's loved ones and of those as yet unborn depends upon our conduct.

Psychologically, although negative emotions and the impulse to destructive action and ideation are found to be repressed in every culture, rarely does a society exact so great a price if they are acted out or even admitted into consciousness.

One's horoscope, the configuration of the celestial bodies at the moment of one's birth, is a second most powerful force in determining one's future - and over which one has no control. The astrologers in Vietnam tend to be most explicit. Their predictions fall into two areas: events to come and personality. This is a matter of no small consequence because the fact is that to a great extent we most certainly do have the capacity to determine events in our life. For example one of my informants told me that his horoscope predicted that he would not marry until he was 32 - and indeed none of his relationships with women worked out until he was 32. I questioned him about these relationships and it turned out in each, it was he who terminated it, often with no provocation. According to him, several of the women were attractive, devoted, mild in nature, and he was very fond of them. However, when he became 32 he married almost the first woman who came along, a person very inferior in status, culture and education, essentially a peasant. The prediction came true, but one wonders to what extent he made it come true. On the other hand one constantly is told of rather wonderous astrological predictions that did come true and that could not be in any way be self determined.

The matter of predicting the personality of the child is another matter entirely and one which needs far greater investigation than this forum can provide. A child's self image, his concept of himself arises from many sources, but the focal one is that of the conscious, and particularly the unconscious, image that the parent has of that child. The child's appraisal of himself is primarily a reflection of the unconscious image that the parent, and later other significant adults, have of him. If the parent is presented with a horoscope that describes the character and personality of the child, and if he believes in this

attribution, there is an excellent possibility that that is the way the child will turn out, and that the determining factor will be the parents' unconscious, not the configuration of the heavens.

Time prevents a discussion of geomancy and the world of the spirits.

The essential point is that on an existential level the Vietnamese live with the profound conviction that life is determined by forces over which they have minimal control and this is a central consideration in their accommodation to the United States. For many this is the second or third time that they have been refugees. It is not something that one ever gets used to, but there is a philosophic acceptance of fate. And this the Vietnamese can accept. It is assigned to bad phuc duc, to the heavens, to the land on which one's ancestors are buried or whatever. The cause, however, is externalized and inasmuch as this is universally concurred in by one's peers, these adverse events are integrated into one's psychic apparatus with a minimum of emotional dislocation.

Appendix B

VIETNAMESE THEMES

VIETNAMESE THEMES

* UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICANS AND VIETNAMESE
* UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICANS AND VIETNAMESE
* TIPS TO AMERICAN EDUCATORS IN DEALING WITH VIETNAMESE STUDENTS
* BIBLIOGRAPHY

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UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN AMERICAN AND VIETNAMESE

AMERICAN	VIETNAMESE
A. Affection	
1. Touching between members of the same sex is not acceptable.	One can see two men or women in the street holding hands.
2. A man and a woman may hold hands or touch in public.	People do not do this in public. It looks "ridiculous."
3. A man can touch a woman (put an arm around her shoulder, hold her arm, kiss her cheek etc.)	A man cannot do this for affection or friendliness. It is "insulting" to a woman.
4. Kissing (between husband and wife, lovers) in public is usually acceptable.	It is a public offense. It has to be done in private quarters. No kissing in front of the children.
5. Parents and children kiss each other.	Not at all, except babies.
B. Celebrations	
1. Christmas and New Year holidays are the most important.	Tet (Lunar New Year) is the most important holiday. This year, Tet fell on January 31, 1976.
2. Americans celebrate birthdays. They give presents and throw birthday parties.	Vietnamese celebrate deathdays. They set up an altar to worship ancestors. They prepare a big meal and invite members of the family and relatives to get together and talk about the good aspects of the dead person.
C. Daily Habits	
1. Clothing	
a. Pyjamas are not acceptable in public.	They are quite acceptable in public, even in the streets.
b. Shoes and slippers are used day and night.	Some people, especially in rural area, walk in the streets with bare feet.

c. Americans often wear leather shoes.	Vietnamese wear wooden and rubber shoes more often due to the tropical weather.
d. Men and women wear western-style clothing.	Men wear western-style clothing but women dress in their national costume, ao dai.
e. Women wear socks or stockings with shoes.	They do not wear socks or stockings because of tropical weather.

2. Cooking and Eating

a. Americans usually do not spend much time in preparing food.	Vietnamese spend a lot of time in preparing food.
b. Groceries are bought once a week.	Groceries are bought every day.
c. Americans say "grace" before eating.	Vietnamese children ask their parents to eat first, and then they eat.
d. Americans use napkins.	Vietnamese do not use napkins but wash the face after each meal.
e. Americans use knives, spoons, forks and plates.	Vietnamese use spoons, chopsticks and a bowl.
f. Americans have one heavy meal daily.	Vietnamese have two equally large meals a day (lunch and dinner).
g. American food is more bland.	Vietnamese use more spices and the food produces strong odors while cooking.
h. Potato or bread is the main starch.	Rice is the main starch.
i. Meat is cooked in big pieces.	Meat is cut into small pieces before cooking.
j. Food is put on individual plates.	The food is put on the table and individuals take piece by piece.
k. All food is shared equally.	Preferred food is served to parents or the elderly first.
l. Americans do not make noise in appreciating good food.	Vietnamese sometimes make noise in eating good food, especially soup to show their appreciation.

r. Women eat equally like men (in quantity).	Women have to eat small amounts (like) cats) and men in quantity (like tigers).
3. Greetings	
a. Americans shake hands with the opposite sex.	Vietnamese do not shake hands with the opposite sex. They do not shake hands with old people or women unless the latter offer their hands first. Slightly bow the head and/or put the hands in front of the chest in order to show more respect. Two women do not shake hands.
b. Americans exchange cheek-kisses to express friendliness.	Vietnamese never exchange cheek-kisses. It is a shock to most married women to be kissed by a male or female in public.
c. Americans use "waving motions" to call people.	Waving motions are only used by adults to call little children not vice versa.
d. To slap someone on the back is a sign of friendship.	It is insulting to the Vietnamese to be slapped on the back; especially to women.
e. Americans can greet anyone in the family first.	A Vietnamese greets the head of a family or an older person first, then the younger ones.
4. Housing	
a. Homes have more rooms, space and appliances.	Homes are small in cities and towns.
b. Homes are mostly constructed of wood or brick.	Homes, in the country side, are usually made of bamboo trees, dry rice plants and mud. In the cities, they are constructed of brick or cement.
c. There are places for children to play inside their homes or backyards.	Children in the cities or towns play in the streets.
d. More rooms are reserved for bedrooms.	One room is reserved for an altar. This is the sacred room where they worship ancestors.

5. Sleeping

a. Everybody has a bed, including children.	Not everybody has a bed and bedrooms are shared.
b. Americans do not share a bed with same sex.	Vietnamese can share a bed with the same sex. It is not abnormal for two male or female friends or relatives to share one bed.
c. A double-bed sleeps only two people.	In Vietnam, three or four may sleep on a double-bed.
d. A bed implies mattress and spring board, bed sheets and bed spread.	A bed is made of either wood or bamboo and covered by a reed mat. (Many Vietnamese do not know how to make a bed the American way.)
e. Children sleep in their own bedrooms.	Children often sleep with their parents.
f. Americans sleep late on the week-ends.	Vietnamese get up early every day.
g. Americans do not take a siesta (afternoon nap).	Vietnamese take siestas almost every day.

D. Dating and Courting

1. Women can go out alone on dates.	"Good" girls hardly go out on dates. It is the sign of a bad or an "uneducated" girl.
2. Men and women can go to either his or her house to see one another.	It is considered very bad for a girl to go to a man's house unless they are engaged.
3. Dating can be "Dutch."	This seldom occurs in Vietnam. Men usually pay all the expenses.
4. Two unmarried people of the opposite sex may share an apartment by mutual agreement.	It is considered immoral for two people of the opposite sex to live together unless they are married.

E. Family Relationship

1. The family relationship is not always close.	The family relationship is very close in Vietnam.
2. Two generations (parents and children) live in a home.	Three or four, sometimes five, generations live under one roof.

3. Sometimes old-aged parents live in nursing homes or by themselves.	Elders live with children and usually are well taken care of by members of the family.
4. Young children have a lot of freedom.	Children have to obey and respect their parents and do not have much freedom.
5. Young children are not as strictly disciplined as in Vietnam.	They are strictly disciplined and behave themselves.
6. Grown-up unmarried children live separately and independently.	Grown-up unmarried children stay with the parents until they are married.
7. Spouses are considered equal legally and intellectually.	The husband is superior and the wife is a subordinate in most areas.
8. Women are independent and have more legal and marital rights.	In general, women must obey their father (when they are young and unmarried), then their husband, then their eldest son (in the case of the death of the husband).

F. Gifts

1. Americans exchange gifts on Christmas and birthday occasions.	Vietnamese exchange gifts only on Tet occasion among family members, relatives and close friends.
2. They express thanks for gifts and/or send "Thank you" notes.	Vietnamese do not send "Thank you" notes.
3. Women happily accept gifts from either sex.	Vietnamese women usually do not accept gifts from the opposite sex. If they do, it is a sign of "encouragement" or "acceptance."

G. Manners

1. People may put their feet on tables or desks either at home or in the office.	It is considered impolite to do this.
2. Talking directly about the main subject is preferable.	Vietnamese talk around the subject before coming to the point.

3. Looking straight into someone's eyes in conversation shows honesty and frankness.	It is not an indication of respect to look into people's eyes.
4. A smile means happiness.	A smile has many meanings: happiness or sorrow, agreement or disagreement, understanding or misunderstanding.
5. Some people speak or laugh loudly in public.	This is considered bad manners, especially for women.
6. Some people lose their temper in public.	It is considered impolite to lose one's temper in public.

H. Name

1. Written Order:

John A. Smith (John is the first name, Smith is the last name.)	Nguyen Van Hung (Nguyen is last, Hung is first.) Middle name "Van" usually indicates male's name, and "Thi", female's name.

2. Addressing:

Formal: Mr. Smith Informal: John	Formal: Mr. Hung Informal: Hung (Family name is never used)

3. Women:

Maiden name: Miss Charlotte E. Brown	Miss Pham Thi Dai
Married name: Mrs. Charlotte A. Smith	Mrs. Pham Thi Dai (a professional woman keeps her full maiden name) or Mrs. Nguyen Van Hung (in general)

I. Philosophy of Life

1. It is more materialistic.	It is geared to spiritualism.
2. Success is the key word, always striving for one step higher.	Vietnamese philosophy is that life is just like a theater and everyone plays his/her own role and then disappears (dies).

3. Americans make plans for the future.	Vietnamese live on a day-to-day basis, due to the recent wars, with little or no planning.
4. Life is competitive.	Vietnamese have a more relaxed attitude towards life.

J. Profession

1. Educated people may not earn a much higher salary than less educated people.	Educated people are more highly paid than less educated people.
2. Educated people do not get automatic respect from others.	Educated people get much respect from others.
3. Skilled professions are highly paid.	Skilled labor is not appreciated or well-paid.
4. Manual labor is an acceptable way of earning a living.	It is considered to be for people of low social class.

K. Religion

1. The majority of the population are Christian.	The majority are Buddhist. There are other religions such as Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity.

L. Some Necessities

1. Telephones are necessary. Almost everyone knows how to use it.	It is a luxury in Vietnam and very few people know how to use it. Vietnamese should be taught to use it economically.
2. Many people know how to drive and own cars.	Very few people know how to drive a car because it is a luxury.
3. Credit cards are widely used.	Vietnamese have no idea what credit cards are. In Vietnam, to be in debt creates a bad reputation, unless a loan is made for investing in business.
4. Banks are popular and widely used.	Banks are for rich people. The majority of people do not know how to use banking services.

5. Home appliances are quite common.	They are considered a luxury. In some villages, there is not even electricity.

M. Time Concept

1. Time is valuable.	Time is considered "elastic." It can be stretched or contracted so that appointments may be earlier or later according to convenience.
2. Punctuality is important, and to be late is inconsiderate.	Punctuality is not important.
3. Americans are in a hurry most of the time.	Vietnamese have a more relaxed attitude.

N. Working

1. Workers are sometimes treated as machines.	Workers are more often treated as human beings.
2. Working conditions are often tense due to deadlines.	Working conditions are more relaxed.
3. Working hours usually are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	They are from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
4. There are usually five workdays.	There are five and a half workdays.

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN AND VIETNAMESE

Compiled by

Nguyen Kim Hoang

Language & Culture Consultant, Vietnamese Program
Regional Cross-Cultural Training and Resource Center
Board of Education of the City of New York

AMERICAN	VIETNAMESE
A. Generalization	
1. Education is geared towards practical and vocational training.	Education is geared towards theoretic and academic training.
2. Education by experimentation is widely employed.	Education by observation is employed.
3. Education is locally managed and controlled by educational districts.	The Ministry of Education nationalizes the curriculum and controls the system for the whole country.
4. Education is funded by federal and local budgets.	It is funded completely by the government budget.
B. Curriculum	
1. School system is 6-3-3.	It is 5-4-3.
2. Curriculum is based on a course basis system. If a student fails a course, he may repeat it.	It is based on a year basis system. If a student does not reach the requirements of one year curriculum he must repeat the whole year.
3. A curriculum is designed for individual needs of a group.	The curriculum is designed by the Ministry of Education.
4. The curriculum is flexible to accommodate more individual needs.	One curriculum is uniformly applied to every student in the whole country.
5. The elective system has been practiced for many years.	Electives were introduced as an idea but the system was not successful due to the lack of trained teachers and administrators.
6. School is held 30 hours per week.	School is held from 24 to 28 hours per week.

7. Foreign languages are introduced at the 6th grade level. When they reach high school, they may continue the language already begun, or elect a new language; German, French, Spanish.	Foreign languages are introduced also at the 6th grade level--French or English. At the 10th grade level students in the literature and languages section are required to take another foreign language as the third language.
8. In high schools, students keep a broad program encompasses literature, foreign language, science, mathematics, physical education and history.	In the 10th grade students are placed in one of three main academic sections; literature and languages, mathematics, or science.
C. Examinations	
1. Examinations are given at the end of each semester, twice a year.	Examinations are given in every subject twice a year.
2. Students pass from first to twelfth grade without examinations restricting further education, but placing students in levels.	After the 5th grade, students must take an entrance examination in order to get into public high schools.
3. At the end of high school, students receive a diploma.	At the end of high school, students must take a national examination called Baccalaureate (equivalent to a high school diploma). If they fail this examination, they are ineligible for higher education. The Baccalaureate exam is given twice a year. Students can take the exam many times as long as they want.
4. In addition to individual examinations given by teachers, students must take standardized exams as well, although these do not influence grades.	Students have to take two end-of-semester examinations in order to pass the academic school year.
5. Teachers sometimes use standardized tests.	Teachers have to prepare their own tests.
6. Most tests are objective.	They are subjective.
D. Grading System	
1. Grading is by letters, from A to F.	Grading is by numbers, from 0 to 20.

2. The average passing grade is C.	The average passing point is 10.
3. Teachers give as many A as students deserve it.	Teachers rarely give a student 20 point even his paper is perfect. Only math teachers give high point such as 19 or 19.50. Language and literature teachers' highest point ranges from 14 to 16.

Grading Equivalent*

A+	range	18 up
A	"	15 to 17
B	"	12 to 14
C	"	9 to 11
D	"	5 to 8
F	"	4 down

*The above equivalent is not official but applicable in classroom situation.

Grading Interpretation in The Degree

10.00 - 11.90	Pass
12.00 - 13.90	Cumlaude
14.00 - 15.90	Magna Cumlaude
16.00 - 20.00	Summa Cumlaude

E. Method of Teaching

1. Subjects are designed sometimes for related work.	Subjects usually are treated separately.
2. Student participation is now used in all schools.	Lecture is the main method for teaching.
3. Special laboratories are used for languages and sciences.	Traditional classrooms are used for all subjects.
4. Foreign languages are taught with emphasis on speaking and listening.	Foreign languages are heavily emphasized on reading and writing.

F. Signs & Symbols

1. One = 1	One = 1
2. Seven = 7	Seven = 7
3. One thousand = 1,000	One thousand = 1.000

4. Twenty cents = $0.20	Twenty cents = 0$20
5. Two dollars = $2.00	Two dollars = 2$00
6. Division: $$\begin{array}{r} 484 \\ 5 \overline{)2420} \\ 20 \\ \hline 42 \\ 40 \\ \hline 20 \\ 20 \\ \hline \end{array}$$	Division: $$\begin{array}{r} 2420 \overline{)5} \\ 42 \quad 484 \\ \hline 20 \\ 0 \end{array}$$

G. Working Habits

1. Students often learn by activities. They are encouraged to use their creativity.	Students are taught to memorize lessons.
2. Each school has its own library.	Every school does not have its own library. Students do not use the library for research.
3. Teachers assign homework at an early age.	Students have very little outside reading assigned.
4. Students are encouraged to work as teams.	Students are taught to work invidually, seldom working together.

H. Classroom Situation

1. The classroom often employs team teaching methods.	The classroom never has but one teacher per class.
2. Teachers are as guides. Discussion is encouraged.	Teachers lecture during a lesson.
3. Students change rooms for each subject.	Teachers switch from room to room instead of students.
4. Students attend school from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Students go for half a day, either from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
5. School is in session five days per week.	School is in session six days per week.
6. Teachers enter the classroom before the students arrive.	Students must rise in reverence to their teacher.
7. Students are encouraged to ask questions and make offer their impressions.	Vietnamese children are often too timid and shy to raise questions.

8. All students are taught to be active in class activities.	Students are taught to obediently listen to the lecture given by their teacher.
9. Students are encouraged to use their initiative.	Students are taught very early to do what they are told to do.
10. Classes are designed for small numbers of students (up to 30).	Classes are very large (up to 65 in public schools and over a hundred in private schools).
11. Students become competitive in giving their responses aloud.	Students are fearful of giving a wrong answer or do not want to show off.
12. If students do not understand something they are encouraged to ask for a further explanation.	Students will ask fellow students for help rather than question their teacher.
13. Male and female students are usually equal in number.	There are always more male students than female due to the cultural tradition.
I. Textbooks	
1. Every student has a text for every subject.	Textbooks are rare.
2. Administrators and teachers choose from a number of textbooks.	Usually only a single text is available for any one subject.
3. Textbooks are originally written by American authors.	Almost textbooks are written in Vietnamese language but are translated from foreign books.
J. Co-education	
1. Co-education is normal.	It is not normal.
2. Boys and girls can sit next to one another.	Boys and girls have to sit in separated rows. They very seldom sit on the same bench or next to each other.
3. Teachers assign boys and girls to be teamworkers.	No teacher would assign a boy and a girl to be teamworkers.

K. Sex Education

1. Sex education begins in the 5th grade, teaching students about the human body.	Sex education does not exist.
2. Sex is a subject discussed both at home and school, an issue also discussed by the parents and teachers.	Sex is quietly taught in the home (mother to daughter, father to son, sometimes, older sister to younger sister, older brother to younger brother.)

L. Discipline

1. Expelling students permanently is very rare.	If a student is expelled, it is impossible to enter another public school.
2. Teachers have little authority to practice strict disciplinary measures in the classroom.	Teachers have considerable authority to engage discipline action when needed.

M. Teacher Qualification

1. All teachers must have a teaching certificate to teach in public school.	In elementary level, after finishing the 9th grade, students take an entrance exam for teachers college. Elementary teachers are trained from one to three years--the total schooling before teaching is from 10 to 12 years. In secondary level, after passing the Baccalaureate, students take an entrance exam at the Faculty of Pedagogy, an university branch. Here, they are trained for 4 years--the total schooling before teaching is 16 years.

N. Relationship Between Schools and Parents

1. Parents and school attempt to keep open communication.	Vietnamese parents hardly have any contact with the school system.
2. Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA) is active, sponsoring social clubs and fund drives.	The PTA remains in theory only, rather than an active force.

3. American parents try to educate their children in the home as well.	Parents often rely on the school system for their children's education.

O. Relationship Between Teachers and Students

1. Teachers are regarded as guides for students.	Teachers have a more absolute teaching role.
2. Modern teachers attempt a friendship role.	Teachers are more authoritarian.
3. Teachers are "teachers".	Teachers are "intellectual" parents.

P. Relationship Between Male and Female Students

1. Males and females are encouraged to become friends.	Social mixing of the sexes is avoided.
2. Integrated parties and group functions are encouraged.	Co-ed parties and affairs are restricted among students.
3. A female may openly see a male without moral constraints.	Females hide the fact that she may have a male friend.

TIPS TO AMERICAN EDUCATORS IN DEALING WITH VIETNAMESE STUDENTS

compiled by

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DO'S	DON'TS
A. Administrators	
Make Vietnamese students feel welcome and comfortable.	Make them feel isolated and strange.
Employ a bilingual staff member if possible.	Just add any other teacher.
Use team-teaching method: one bilingual teacher and one monolingual teacher.	Use traditional and lecture method with one English speaking teacher.
Use the services of Vietnamese speaking teacher or teacher aid.	Just add any one to do the services.
Develop or search for special instructional materials.	Use the same instructional materials as the American students.
Develop careful language laboratory for them to extra practice.	Ignore that they need extra practice in English.
Organize in-service training for staff members who are involved in working with them.	Assume your teachers can deal tactfully and confidently with the Vietnamese children.
Have orientation for them and their parents (school policies, classes, extra curricular activities and so on).	Assume that Vietnamese students are completely Westernized.
Develop strong community-school-parent cooperation.	Neglect Vietnamese parents because they don't speak English.

B. Classroom Teachers

Use daily and basic English vocabularies in speaking to them.	Use slangs, figurative language or colloquial expressions.
Use simple and short grammatical structures.	Use long and complex sentences leading to frustration.
Speak distinctly, clearly and simply.	Speak too rapidly or slur the words.
Speak softly and slowly.	Scream or speak too fast.
Give written assignments and important instructions.	Give homework assignments or crucial instructions orally. Vietnamese children understand written English better than when it is spoken.
Use peer group instruction in their native language.	Separate Vietnamese students from each other.
Select willing American students to help them, if possible.	Assign opposite sex students to help.
Assign team work with American students.	Assign them to work with American opposite sex students.
Encourage them to seek help whenever they need it.	Suppose they are self-confident and self-sufficient.
Teach them English as a second language as soon and rapidly as possible.	Assume that their English ability is adequate in the classroom situation.
Use audiovisual aids as much as possible.	Assume that they understand teachers' explanation thouroughly.
Encourage them to speak up, if possible.	Push them to speak up if they don't seem ready for it.
Encourage them to raise questions, if possible.	Push them if their English is not good enough yet.
Learn to pronounce their name clearly, correctly and in the Vietnamese way. Ex: Nguyen Van Thu (Nguyen is the family name, Van is the middle name and Thu is the first name). In Vietnam, only the first name is called either formal or informal. If in doubt, ask them.	Call Nguyen.

Teach them to write names in the American way.	Neglect to show the difference in writing names.
Teach them to say "Good morning", "Good-bye" and "Thank you" whenever it is appropriate (the situation occurs).	Forget that they are not accustomed to American manners yet.
Ask them to contribute their cultural background.	Assume they understand all about the American cultural background.
Explain the grading system as it is in the United States.	Forget their grading system is different.
Encourage them to get acquaintance with American signs and symbols in arithmetic, monetary way of writing and measuring system.	Confuse them with these items.
Pose some questions related to the course to check whether they understand or not.	Ask whether they understand or not. Vietnamese students are too polite, they rarely say "no". Even when they do not understand, they will still say "yes".
Teach them how to look at the preface, introduction, table of contents of each text book.	Assume they know how to use American text books efficiently.
Show them how to use the school library, cafeteria, lockers etc.	Assume that they are accustomed to American institutions.
Teach them to share the responsibilities in the maintenance of school property.	Assume that they are all well-behaved.
Explain the safety signs and symbols in school.	Suppose they all know.
Be patient and wait for answers.	Get impatient and excited.
Secretly be sensitive to them.	Make them feel being spotted.
Praise them orally.	Touch older children on the head, it is not appropriate.
Be pleasant.	Make colloquial jokes. They will feel left out.
Avoid embarrassing them in class.	Ask political or sensitive questions that will make them feel insulted or ridiculous.

Encourage them to participate in extra activities as much as possible.

Make them feel at ease and comfortable in classroom situation.

Push them to participate, especially girls, because they are usually shy and often feel awkward.

Make them like a special queer little phenomenons.

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